

when all of a sudden a girl comes down to swim. She is of such extraordinary beauty that surely wherever she goes a thousand ships launch themselves.

Everybody's mouth rounds, the conversation settles around our feet like old dogs and damned if it isn't time to go to work and I've had enough of this rotten coffee and my old lady's going to raise hell as it is.

Outside the porters fail the asst. manager's wastebasket inspection. They look at their feet like bad dancers and say, "Yes, sir."

THE CROWD

Out of nowhere she said that although she'd never slept with another man while we'd been together, she was burning for someone else.

I pointed out that the way things were arranged she could do just about anything she wanted. What I wanted was to be spared the details.

She called me at work the next day and it was blow-by-blow, so there was trouble. But of course I was right. She was sorry.

It got pretty regular after that. Sometimes it turned me on but mostly, like a closet light, just off. I told her that before she brought home video tapes we should split up.

No, never. She would change. So she changed her clothes and went out.

A week later I got a note saying that she still loved me and, no matter who she was with, thought of me. She sincerely hoped that I thought of her, too, and not when I was mad or lonely but all the time, no matter how intimate the circumstances.

SHE SAID IT'D BE THIRTY FIVE DOLLARS

so I came up with it. She poured me a drink, had another for herself. She licked her lips and winked, she puckered up and gave her shoulders a little shake, she wet one finger and dabbed

at her stocking top right where it clipped onto one long, black garter.

"You're more like it," she said while I watched. "One night last week I was all feathers and Arpege for this peach-fuzz kid with hair down to here who said I shouldn't be plastic. He said he just wanted me to be natural.

"I figured he was after some old-fashioned bareass but when I came out of the bathroom he was eating out of the refrigerator. He gave me the once over and said I didn't look that fat with my clothes on but who could be natural anyway with her cunny shaved like a heart.

"Is that something or not? What kind of kids are they raising out there, I'd like to know. You think I'm pretty don't you baby and what about these brand new spike-heeled pointy-toed black patent leather shoes."

ROYCE NEWPORT MONEY

had everything including monogrammed sandwiches but after graduation he refused to go into business with his father. He wanted to get out on his own, see where his head was at and find out if there wasn't more to life than getting and spending.

No, Royce did not want to be carried on his quest by faithful servants. He wanted to hitchhike.

A grizzled old farmer gave him his first lift. He was a man whose father had lost everything in the Dust Bowl and he himself had eaten an ant hill, but he said he wouldn't trade places with Howard Hughes.

A madame on the skids took him as far as Collinsville. Hell, she'd been through as many fortunes as there are days in the week and between the good times took second billing in a stag smoker act named "Raoul & The Swine Woman." But she was happy, yes sir!

Outside of Waco he met a gambler, a man who had never won a bet in his life. He was sitting way in the back of a truck stop because he'd lost his clothes betting that a mummy would be next out of the rest room at the House of Pies. Was he happy? As a clam.

It was like that clear across the country and back: poor but happy, salt of the earth, laugh and let the world go by.